



CECIL B DEMILLE  
AMERICAN EPIC

featuring  
CHARLTON HESTON  
MARTIN SCORSESE  
STEVEN SPIELBERG

Music by ELMER BERNSTEIN  
Narrated by KENNETH BRANAGH



A two-part documentary from PHOTOPLAY PRODUCTIONS  
Directed by KEVIN BROWNLOW Produced by PATRICK STANBURY

# CECIL B DEMILLE AMERICAN EPIC

Directed by Kevin Brownlow  
Produced by Patrick Stanbury  
Narrator Kenneth Branagh  
Music composed and conducted by Elmer Bernstein  
Edited by Christopher Bird  
Camera Gerald Saldo

Orchestrations Emilie A Bernstein, Patrick Russ  
Music Producer Cynthia Millar  
Music recording and mixing Christopher Dibble  
City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra  
Opening Title Design XTV: Dal Bhatia, Andy Godden  
3D Animation Adam Sealey

## **Interviewees**

Elmer Bernstein  
Bob Birchard  
Frank Coghlan  
James D'Arc  
Agnes DeMille  
Cecilia DeMille Presley  
Richard DeMille  
Arnold Gillespie  
Henry Hathaway  
Charlton Heston  
Angela Lansbury  
Betty Lasky  
Jesse Lasky Jr  
A.C. Lyles  
Mickey Moore  
Pat Moore  
Joseph Newman  
Martin Scorsese  
Diana Serra Carey  
Steven Spielberg  
Gloria Swanson

# PHOTOPLAY

Photoplay Productions is a world leader in silent film restoration and film-history documentaries. Under the direction of Kevin Brownlow and Patrick Stanbury it is one of the few independent companies to operate in this field and has been credited with the revival of interest in the lost art of silent movies.

Photoplay's reputation has developed over twenty years, starting with Kevin Brownlow and David Gill's documentary *Hollywood – the Pioneers*, which brought to the glories of the silent screen to a television audience. The meticulous research that characterised *Hollywood* underpins all Photoplay's documentaries, their most recent being *Garbo* and *I'm King Kong* for Turner Classic Movies. Photoplay's catalogue of film restorations now exceeds 35 titles ranging from epics to comedies. As well as managing this unique film archive, Photoplay holds an archive specialising in production stills from the silent era and interviews with veterans of the silent screen.

## DOCUMENTARIES

D.W.GRIFFITH - FATHER OF FILM

CINEMA EUROPE - THE OTHER HOLLYWOOD

UNIVERSAL HORROR

LON CHANEY - A THOUSAND FACES

THE TRAMP AND THE DICTATOR

CECIL B DEMILLE - AMERICAN EPIC

SO FUNNY IT HURT - BUSTER KEATON AND MGM

GARBO

I'M KING KONG!

# BIOGRAPHIES

## DIRECTOR KEVIN BROWNLOW

Since starting his own film collection at the age of eleven, Kevin Brownlow has worked in the cinema - either as a filmmaker in his own right or as a historian. He entered documentaries in 1955 with World Wide Pictures and became an editor in 1958. In the 1960s, he was Lindsay Anderson's editor on *The White Bus* and supervising editor on Tony Richardson's *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1968). With Andrew Mollo, he directed two feature films, *It Happened Here* (1964), and *Winstanley* (1975).

In 1980, with David Gill, Brownlow produced and directed the television series *Hollywood* based on his book *The Parade's Gone By*. Thames Television then sponsored the screening of Brownlow's reconstruction of Abel Gance's *Napoleon* as part of the 1980 London Film Festival. The five-hour epic was accompanied by a live orchestra playing a specially commissioned score. The outstanding success of the event demonstrated to a modern audience the power and excitement of silent films.

For Thames Television, Brownlow and Gill restored over twenty-five silent films including *Ben-Hur*, *The Thief Of Bagdad*, *Intolerance* and *The Crowd*. In 1990, Brownlow and Gill with Patrick Stanbury formed their own company, Photoplay Productions. In 1992, Channel Four Television agreed to support a series of silent film revivals. The Channel Four Silents included, *The Four Horsemen Of The Apocalypse*, *Wings*, *The Iron Horse*, *Sunrise*, *The Phantom Of The Opera*, *The Wedding March* and *The Iron Mask*. Photoplay's most recent restorations for Channel 4 have been *Orphans Of The Storm* (2001) and *The Cat And The Canary* (2004) and DeMille's last silent film, *The Godless Girl* (2007).

Brownlow and Gill also produced and directed a number of film history documentaries. After *Hollywood* they made a series on the great comedians of the silent era; *Unknown Chaplin* (1983), *Buster Keaton: A Hard Act To Follow* (1987), and *Harold Lloyd: The Third Genius* (1990). They also produced *British Cinema* in 1985, featuring episodes directed by directors Alan Parker, Lindsay Anderson and Sir Richard Attenborough. Their documentaries for Photoplay are *D.W. Griffith - father of film* (1993), broadcast in the US and the UK, and *Cinema Europe - The Other Hollywood* (1995) for BBC2 and screened in UK, France, Germany and the US.

After David Gill's death in 1997, Brownlow and Stanbury continued Photoplay's work with a documentary for Universal Studios, *Universal Horror* (1998) followed by *Lon Chaney - A Thousand Faces* (2000) for Turner Classic Movies and *The Tramp And The Dictator* (2002) with the collaboration of Michael Kloft of Spiegel TV. Since making *Cecil B DeMille - American Epic* their work has included *Garbo* and *I'm King Kong!*

Kevin Brownlow's book on film include *How it Happened Here* (1968); *The Parade's Gone By...*(1968); *The War the West and the Wilderness* (1978); *Hollywood: The Pioneers* (1979); *Napoléon - Abel Gance's Classic Film* (1983); *Behind the Mask of Innocence* (1990); *David Lean - a Biography* (1996) and *Mary Pickford Rediscovered* (1999).

# PRODUCER

## PATRICK STANBURY

Having trained as an accountant, Patrick worked in commerce, becoming financial director of a number of publishing companies. At the age of 36 he made a bold career change, giving up the security of the financial sector for the haphazard world of film – a neglected field of film at that, silent film. The opportunity presented itself in 1990 when Photoplay Productions was formed. The company needed someone with financial acumen and expert knowledge of silent films. Patrick was probably the only man in the world for the job, being an accountant and an established film collector. As a child fascinated by history, Patrick was drawn to silent cinema. In silent films he found all the mystique of a lost world yet the satisfaction that it was still accessible. Because silent film production had stopped only thirty years before, many of the films still existed, even in his parents' memories. He read everything then available on the subject and inevitably came across the name of Kevin Brownlow. The two became friends, Patrick joining Kevin on several research trips prior to joining Photoplay (on one of which they found *The Cat and the Canary* (1927) which, nineteen years later would become a Photoplay restoration). Once a director of Photoplay, apart from administrative responsibilities, Patrick was associate producer on *D.W. Griffith – Father of Film* and *Cinema Europe – The Other Hollywood*, as well as on all the Channel Four Silents from 1990 – 1996. He has since produced all of Photoplay's film restorations, taking sole charge of the preparation for video and music recording. He has also produced all their subsequent documentaries, including *Universal Horror*, *Lon Chaney – a Thousand Faces*, *The Tramp and the Dictator*, *Cecil B DeMille – American Epic*, *Garbo and I'm King Kong!*. A third aspect of his work at Photoplay has been the development of the company's distribution of silent films.

# EDITOR

## CHRISTOPHER BIRD

After leaving university Christopher Bird joined Photoplay and was assistant editor on *Lon Chaney – A Thousand Faces*. After this, he edited *The Tramp and The Dictator* and *Cecil B DeMille – American Epic* for Photoplay Productions. He has also edited the preservation material of the 1927 film *The Cat and the Canary* for Photoplay's restoration of that film. His most recent work for Photoplay was as editor and co-director for *Garbo* (2005) and *I'm King King!* (2005). Elsewhere he edited the feature *Emotional Backgammon* directed by Leon Herbert and winner of the Jury Prize of the Pan African Film Festival 2004 and the Achievement Award of the Screen Nation Awards 2003. He has also written and published the book *Silent Sentinels*, on Britain's fixed coastal defences of the First and Second World Wars.

# THE PRODUCTION

DeMille retained an enormous archive documenting the whole of his career, and was himself frequently on the screen. Photoplay was given unparalleled access to the archive by the DeMille Estate, and the material provided the basis of their two-part documentary.

DeMille's collection of stills, designs and documents, the Cecil B DeMille Archive, are housed mainly at the Harold B Lee Library at Brigham Young University. Producer Patrick Stanbury made one preliminary research trip there before returning with director Kevin Brownlow to film much of the documentary and photographic material used in their film. They also interviewed the collection's curator James D'Arc. DeMille's personal film collection is held at The George Eastman House and UCLA film archives. Research trips were made to both archives and much of the filmic material in Episode 1 was sourced there.

Film material for Episode 2, mainly DeMille's sound films, was accessed through the Hollywood studios Paramount, Universal and Warner Bros (now owners of the MGM library). An important inclusion in this episode is production footage showing how DeMille recreated the parting of the Red Sea for *The Ten Commandments* (1956). Footage of this complex special effect was found whilst researching at Paramount.

The second major component of the documentary is interview material. Current interviews were filmed during four trips to Hollywood. They include those with surviving members of DeMille's family, granddaughter Cecilia and adopted son Richard; DeMille's collaborators including actors Angela Lansbury, Charlton Heston and Pat Moore, composer Elmer Bernstein, assistant director Mickie Moore and Paramount executive A. C Lyles. Interviews with Martin Scorsese and Steven Spielberg give a contemporary commentary by two of Hollywood's most important directors.

A great asset to the production were interviews shot by Kevin Brownlow in the 1970s for his documentary *Hollywood*. These include Gloria Swanson, Agnes DeMille, Henry Hathaway and Arnold Gillespie. Later interviews with Swanson, Agnes DeMille and screenwriter Jesse Lasky Jr, were filmed in 1981 by TV film critic Barry Norman for his BBC film *'Ready when you are, Mr. DeMille!'*. For footage of DeMille himself, apart from the many prologues, production shots and newsreel, the BBC archive had an interview with DeMille filmed in 1957. It is used extensively throughout the film, providing us with DeMille's own reflections on his career and even giving him the last word, in a characteristic, straight-to-camera, farewell.

Interview and research trips were spread out throughout the production period (mid 2002 – 2003). Editor Christopher Bird, started to shape the film in 2003, adding new material as it arrived. Encapsulating a prolific career of 50 years, the rough cut was three hours long. Once the length of two hours was achieved, the narration was written and recorded, the title sequence completed and in September 2003, the film was submitted to Elmer Bernstein for its final embellishment.

At 82 years old, Bernstein is a direct link to DeMille's last film, *The Ten Commandments* (1956). As a young man he wrote the score which became so much part of the film's success. Like DeMille, Bernstein went on to build a reputation working on epic films, his biblical and western themes making his name synonymous with film music. It was the ambition of producer Patrick Stanbury to bring DeMille and Bernstein together again on a film project. Having the greatest respect for the director who had launched his career, Bernstein agreed. Photoplay's production team in London, had to direct Bernstein in Hollywood by email. They had one actual production meeting with the composer in September 2003 prior to recording in Prague in November 2003.

The documentary was completed in December 2003 and first broadcast in the US on TCM in April, 2004.

## PRESS CUTTINGS

No one does filmmaker documentaries with a keener balance of elegy and analysis than Kevin Brownlow. His swift two hours on DeMille, the master of silent melodrama who becomes Hollywood's king of sex-and-piety spectacles, captures the pioneering spirit of early American movies. It shows how the director, even after he devolved into a formulaic showman, retained some aspects of this spirit, especially in his final film and magnum – make that jeroboam – opus, *The Ten Commandments*. Among the stash of revelations: DeMille, who had to modify a final print of *The King of Kings* to lay the blame for the Crucifixion on one character instead of the Jewish people, was the son of a Jewish mother who'd converted to Christianity; perhaps even more remarkably, between studio stints, the future anti-Communist went looking for work in the Soviet Union and declared Communism a fascinating experiment. The brisk and beautifully preserved clips overflow with DeMille's histrionic vitality, and the selection of new and archival interviews is astute. In particular, Steven Spielberg (DeMille's sometime heir) holds forth eloquently on this epic-maker's strength and limitations.

**The New Yorker; 12/4/04; M.S.**

*The Last Samurai* and *Master and Commander* – these are movies DeMille would have made 60 years ago with Gary Cooper. A three-part, 10-hour *The Lord of the Rings*? The old man would have eagerly risen to the challenge. *The Passion of Christ*? CB did it all first.

**Newark Star – Ledger; April 5<sup>th</sup> 2004; Stephen Whitty**

A fascinating documentary about one of the cinema's highest-profile film makers. Generously mixing clips with observations from Cecil B. DeMille's family, collaborators and historians plus directors Steven Spielberg and Martin Scorsese, *American Epic* is ready for its close-up, sprinkling juicy tidbits while encapsulating a half-century of film history.'

**Weekly Variety; 5/4/04; Brian Lowry**

Thou should not miss Turner Classic Movies' wonderful new documentary *Cecil B DeMille – American Epic* about the famed director producer of *The Ten Commandments*. With commentary by Steven Spielberg and Martin Scorsese, among others, this illuminating profile of the Hollywood pioneer regards as master showman and a maestro of kitsch, who packaged his reverent spectaculars in lurid sexual trappings. With lots of

clips and behind-the-scenes gossip, this special proves DeMille has always been ready for his close-up.

*TV Guide; 3/4/04; Matt Roush*

*Cecil B DeMille – American Epic* is a two-part documentary about a director who did more to shape our religious imagination than any other. Who can forget the imagery of *The Ten Commandments* including what Steven Spielberg calls the greatest special effect ever: the parting of the Red Sea? Not so many of us remember 1927's *King of Kings*: but after DeMille filmed the last scene, the crucifixion, cast and crew were so moved that many knelt in real prayer before the prop cross. Later, there were problems when Jewish groups complained that the movie made all Jews look like villains, so DeMille edited the ending to place the blame for Jesus' death on just one guy. He also donated all his profits from the movie to charity. Move over, Mel.

As personally religious as he was DeMille knew that 'You can't convert a row of empty seats.' Thus was born the biblical epic featuring side dishes of Roman orgies, lesbian dance sequences, Claudette Colbert in a bath of asses' milk, and a half-naked Victor Mature wrestling a lion in *Samson and Delilah*. But DeMille whose career began with the birth of the movies, was not just a *schlock-meister*. He pioneered techniques in sound and photography, and his early movies explored many genres – noir, marital comedy and social crusading – long before they became standard fare in the hands of other directors.

**The Wall Street Journal; 2/4/04; Nancy DeWolf Smith**

The reliable docu-team of Kevin Brownlow and Patrick Stanbury assembled a mighty array of talent for this film, including Steven Spielberg and Martin Scorsese, who described the ecstatic wonder of seeing their first DeMille film. Angela Lansbury and Charlton Heston tell what it was like to work for the man, and there are personal anecdotes from granddaughter Cecilia DeMille Presley, who was on hand for the gruelling production of *The Ten Commandments* (he died three years later, in 1959).

There's some wonderful colour footage of 'Commandments' being made, including the wall of water DeMille built for the parting of the Red Sea. We also see some great black and white publicity reels that featured the master himself facing the camera, explaining his movies to the public as well as any pitchman could. And there's a typically grandiose score DeMille would have been proud of. It's composed and directed by Elmer Bernstein, the composer of *The Ten Commandments* and one of the talking heads here as well.

**Kansas City Star; Aaron Barnhart**



# CECIL B DEMILLE

## AMERICAN EPIC

The title says it all: DeMille's films are the blueprint for American films, his dynamism the motor of the American Century, his life is the stuff of the American Dream.

Cecil B DeMille personified American cinema. He became a legend in his own time playing himself in Billy Wilder's paen to Hollywood, *Sunset Boulevard*. Now, nearly 50 years after his death, DeMille's name is still the byword for the Hollywood spectacular. His career, although dominated by *The Sign of the Cross*, *King of Kings*, *Samson and Delilah*, and *The Ten Commandments*, was far wider than the vast but limited domain of the biblical epic. As a pioneer film-maker he showed great technical invention and dramatic subtlety. Like D. W. Griffith he instinctively knew the power of film as an instrument of social reform and propaganda. Unlike Griffith, he had a salesman's sense of his audience which gave him a string of commercial successes throughout his career. Away from films he established a private army in Hollywood during World War 1, started one of the world's first commercial airlines, and became the voice of America as the presenter of Lux Radio Theatre. A confirmed conservative, he used his influence in the anti-Communist movement of the 1950s, tainting his professional success with political controversy. At heart he was a leader who inspired great warmth and loyalty. This film biography is compiled from interviews with DeMille's granddaughter Cecilia, his adopted son Richard and his niece Agnes; actors Gloria Swanson, Angela Lansbury and Charlton Heston; co-workers Micky Moore and A.C Lyles; fellow directors Robert Parrish and Joseph Mankiewicz; and with a commentary on his films by current-day Hollywood's most established film directors, Martin Scorsese and Stephen Spielberg.

## EPISODE 1

Cecil B DeMille was the personification of American cinema. He helped make Hollywood into a film production centre in 1914 and was still making pictures in 1956. Considered by some to be the greatest showman on earth, others thought him a mediocre director, dependent on hokum and bad taste. DeMille was more than a maker of Biblical epics. His theatrical background and the impresario David Belasco strongly influenced the subject matter and style of his films. As a pioneer film-maker he showed great invention and imagination - whether in his use of colour and lighting, sexual innuendo or social and political comment. He had a revolutionary approach to research and art design which gave a sense of authenticity to extraordinary plot lines. He was a man of many parts: a devout Christian and committed husband and family man, he kept a regular mistress and many more on the side. He became an influential figure beyond the film industry, forming a private army in Hollywood and establishing one of the world's first commercial airlines, Mercury Aviation. The box office success of DeMille's early films played a major part in the growth of Paramount Pictures. But by the mid-1920s, studio head Adolph Zukor feared that DeMille's lavish productions would ruin the company. Wounded by this vote of no confidence from the studio he had helped build, DeMille left and set up as an independent. His own studio lost money so, at the end of the 1920s, he

moved to M-G-M. Here the director took second place to the producer and, with the coming of sound, DeMille had to relearn his craft. He was dropped by M-G-M.

## EPISODE 2

1931, Hollywood founding father, Cecil B DeMille is an outcast of the studios. Desperate for work, he even travelled to Soviet Russia. On his return to the US, Paramount gave him a one picture deal. Wary of the wrath of studio boss Zukor, DeMille made the epic *The Sign of the Cross*, without an epic budget. He replaced expensive spectacle with titillating scenes of sex and sadism, a formula for box office success. The film was a colossal hit and consolidated DeMille's position at Paramount. His reputation rocketed further when in 1936 he became host of Lux Radio Theatre with an audience of 30 million. The show made DeMille's the voice of America, which he put to good use when introducing his own series of films on American history. His radio career was cut short by a dispute with the radio union. A passionate advocate of individual freedom, DeMille would use his considerable influence in the 1950s to keep 'The Land of the Free' free from Communism. Political controversy may have tainted his reputation but his professional standing went from strength to strength. Billy Wilder even had him play himself, the archetypal Hollywood director, in *Sunset Boulevard*. He is seen directing *Samson and Delilah*, another fire and brimstone epic, in which Victor Mature – Samson - graphically destroys the temple. DeMille's next film, *The Greatest Show on Earth*, shows the demise of another great institution: the travelling circus. A labour of love of epic proportions, it won DeMille his first Academy Award. In 1956 he took his production team and actors to Egypt on *The Ten Commandments*. Filming in the Egyptian desert with a cast and crew of thousands, DeMille was at the pinnacle of his career when he suffered a severe heart attack. He recovered, returning to Hollywood to continue his heavy production schedule, which included the parting of the Red Sea – a remarkable special effect even compared to today's standards. At 73, DeMille had made his most successful film, a testimony to his immense physical and mental dynamism that had galvanized Hollywood for almost half a century. He died in 1959, planning another film – this time on space travel.

# EPISODE 1 DETAILED SYNOPSIS

**Jan 21 1959 – Cecil B DeMille died. It was the end of a life of Biblical proportions. A founder of Hollywood he created the studio that became Paramount. His career spanned half a century, 70 films and much controversy. Was he a thoroughly bad director or the greatest showman on earth?**

New York, 1913. The slogan 'The Land of the Free' acts as a magnet for immigrants. Masses from the old world, desperate for work, are almost as desperate for cheap entertainment. All over the immigrant quarter nickelodeons spring up showing short, primitive films. They are not a respectable form of entertainment but in some theatre districts one or two showmen dare to present longer, more dignified films from Europe.

The name DeMille is up in lights on Broadway, but it is that of William DeMille, Cecil B DeMille's older brother, a successful playwright. When the two collaborated on a play, William was the dominant partner. In 1913, Cecil was desperate. He had made no money as an actor or producer. He had a wife and child to support and, thanks to the movies, the bottom had dropped out of the popular theatre.

DeMille joined forces with his friends Jesse Lasky and Samuel Goldfish to try their luck in the movies. The Lasky Company, as their company was called, had the vision to make a feature when all their competitors were making shorts. For his film DeMille needed mountains and farmland. Looking for locations he arrived in Hollywood, a town founded a few years earlier as a vice-free utopia of Christian values. Free land was offered to any denomination willing to erect a house of worship. He arrived in late 1913 and rented space at a studio on Vine Street, a recently converted barn.

DeMille's first film was taken from a Broadway hit, *The Squaw Man* (1914). It was about the love of an Indian girl for a white man. While other long films were stagebound, DeMille's had a feeling for location and space. Making Hollywood's first feature, DeMille was not only taking a risk but facing determined opposition from the established film companies who would stop at nothing to keep newcomers out. Despite many setbacks, *The Squaw Man* was an enormous success. DeMille's brother William was so impressed he abandoned Broadway to join the studio. *The Squaw Man* consolidated the Lasky company and they planned to make a feature a month. At the Lasky barn, DeMille built up the studio from scratch. He had the title of director-general and supervised the output of a studio which quickly became one of the most influential in Hollywood.

DeMille was not afraid of tackling controversial subjects. His film *Kindling* (1915), was social comment with a vengeance. The husband shows his wife squalor to put her off having children in the slums. Variety said 'It is enough to cause one to become ill in viewing it.' For sheer shock value, few films could match DeMille's *The Cheat* (1915). Sessue Hayakawa plays a wealthy Japanese art collector. He lends money to a society woman, expecting favours which she refuses to grant. On *The Cheat* DeMille used the techniques of lighting and decor he had learned from David Belasco. To these he added the formula he would use for the rest of his career - sex, sadism and lurid melodrama. DeMille stamped his films with his own distinctive style. Right from the beginning he made his personality familiar to the public by appearing in prologues to his films. And he sought to create a unique look. Inspired by the Belasco lighting style, he and his cameraman Alvin Wyckoff opted for the strongest possible effect.

But towering above all other film-makers was D.W. Griffith, who had made an epic of the Civil War. DeMille saw Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) transform the industry and lead to the building of picture palaces to show such epic feature films. DeMille was rising fast as a rival to Griffith. One of his finest films was *The Golden Chance* (1915) made at the same time as *The Cheat*. A girl from the slums is being used to entrap this rich playboy, played by Wallace Reid. She finds herself falling in love. That night, by chance, her burglar husband breaks in ...

DeMille built a strong reputation with films mostly on an intimate scale. At the same time D W Griffith made another monumental epic, *Intolerance* (1916). He rebuilt the ancient city of Babylon with sets which towered above Hollywood. Not to be outdone, DeMille launched his own epic. This was the first of the grand spectacles the public would link with the name DeMille. *Joan of Arc* was played by the opera star Geraldine Farrar. DeMille enhanced the realism of the burning with a colour process which he pioneered. Despite objections from the Catholic church, *Joan the Woman* was well received, but failed to make a profit. This put him out of favour with his new boss, Adolph Zukor, who refused to approve DeMille's more ambitious projects. The two men had a wary relationship.

America had entered the war. DeMille joined stars like Chaplin, Fairbanks and Pickford in selling Liberty Bonds. He tried to join the army but was turned down because he was too old. Instead he formed the Lasky home guard from his actors and technicians, and drilled them on the backlot. The sinking of the liner Lusitania by a German submarine in 1915 had outraged America. DeMille recreated this event in a propaganda film, *The Little American* (1917). He brilliantly contrasted brutal German efficiency with American innocence, personified by Mary Pickford.

DeMille was an avid pilot. His enthusiasm for flying led to his creating one of the first passenger airlines in the United States - Mercury Aviation. His airfield was in the heart of Los Angeles. One of the most extraordinary of all aerial stunts was staged here for the film, *The Grim Game*. But Adolph Zukor was terrified at the risk his director-general was taking by continuing to fly. DeMille had to choose. 'I knew there were better flyers than I' he said, 'but directors - well, you can draw your own conclusions, so I stayed in pictures.'

DeMille was determined to raise the new art to new heights. His most remarkable film to date was a dark drama. In *The Whispering Chorus* (1918), the leading character steals from his employer and is desperate to conceal the crime. He finds a corpse in the river, batters it beyond recognition, gives it his identity, and ends up in jail for his own murder. DeMille's filmic depiction of the man's psychological turmoil - what was then termed, 'though photography' - was ahead of its time.

The end of the war brought the start of the Jazz Age. Audiences clamoured more than ever for escapist entertainment. With European industries crippled by the war, Hollywood was now the film capital of the world. Its studios were expanding. Lasky and Zukor had made their Paramount trademark universally celebrated and their most valuable asset was Cecil B DeMille. For the new markets, DeMille turned away from dark dramas and brought out a series of sexual comedies. In *Why Change Your Wife?* with Bebe Daniels and Thomas Meighan, he allowed the public to peer into a private world. DeMille's subtle approach to these marital films would have a strong influence on other directors. With their success he overtook even D W Griffith, whose films were unable to speak to the new generation. DeMille placed the most glamorous women in the most exotic settings. His films became more and more opulent, often including historical

flashback. In *Male and Female* (1919) he took his contemporary characters to ancient Babylon where one of them, Gloria Swanson, had to enter a lion's den.

In contrast to his films, DeMille seemed to lead a normal family life. He had married Constance Adams, the daughter of a judge, when he was 21. They had one daughter, Cecilia, and shortly after adopted two other children. DeMille seemed just the kind of person the founding fathers of Hollywood had hoped for - a firm believer in Christian values. However, he had a regular mistress, his co-writer Jeanie MacPherson. His private life, if somewhat unorthodox, was nothing compared to the scandals that rocked Hollywood at the time. Wallace Reid, Paramount's biggest star, suddenly died of drug addiction. Comedian Roscoe Arbuckle was accused of rape and murder. The scandal reverberated around the world. While the Arbuckle trial continued, William Desmond Taylor, a leading director was murdered. All the scandals revolved around employees of Paramount.

The DeMilles faced a scandal of their own when they adopted a fourth child, Richard. It was widely held that he was an illegitimate child of Cecil's. Cecil did nothing to dispel the idea. It was not until the death of his brother that he admitted to his adopted son that his uncle William was his father and his mother was authoress Lorna Moon. DeMille successfully averted a scandal at the risk of his own reputation. But the public was still critical of Hollywood morals. DeMille decided that he would bolster Hollywood's morality by making illustrated sermons. In *Manslaughter* (1922) he compared the morals of modern youth to orgies in ancient Rome.

No matter who *played* in his pictures, DeMille was the real star. Publicity for his films focussed more on DeMille than the story. By the early 20s, he was one of the biggest attractions at the box office. DeMille asked his *audience* to suggest the theme of his next film. Several people came up with *The Ten Commandments* (1923). He made it a modern day parable but decided it wasn't enough. He added a spectacular Biblical prologue with its design inspired by 19th century artists. DeMille poured Paramount's money into the rebuilding of ancient Egypt, hiring the best craftsmen and insisting on absolute authenticity. A tent city - Camp DeMille - took shape in the sands of Central California, large enough for two and a half thousand extras.

DeMille's ambitions far exceeded his budget. The head of Paramount, Adolph Zukor, feared that the runaway costs would ruin the company. Zukor's fears were unfounded. *The Ten Commandments* made a fortune. It became one of the landmark films that propelled Hollywood into its golden age. With hits like this to its name, Paramount was able to expand its studio. But the spectre of the budget on *The Ten Commandments* would come back to haunt DeMille. A favourite project was *The Sorrows of Satan*. Zukor cancelled the project and restarted it with D W Griffith. Zukor's lack of vision caused DeMille to leave Paramount and set up his own studio. Besides directing his own films, he planned to supervise 25 programme pictures a year. But the most important film he would make for his studio was *The King of Kings*.

Of all the films DeMille ever made, *The King of Kings* was the closest to his heart. As an independent, the film was a tremendous gamble. 'To transfer the Bible to the screen,' said DeMille, 'you cannot cheat. You must believe.' *The King of Kings* made it seem as if the Jews had killed Christ, and Jewish organisations were outraged. DeMille had to reedit and lay the blame on just one character - the High Priest. The picture was a massive success. DeMille donated his profits to charity.

*The Godless Girl* was the most controversial subject DeMille ever put on film. A savage indictment of reform schools, its research had taken eight months and every incident was based on fact. Fire breaks out and the inmates sabotage attempts to extinguish it. The heroine has been chained up in solitary confinement and cannot escape the blaze. The uncommercial subject matter of *The Godless Girl* caused the film to be held back. DeMille's studio was in severe trouble - hardly any of its films made money. The nature of cinema had changed. Talking pictures had arrived.

DeMille lost his studio and had to move his operation elsewhere. He was rescued by MGM but here the director took second place to the producer. On top of all that, DeMille had to contend with a medium where action and pace took second place to dialogue. Unusually, DeMille was able to bring back the mobility of silent films while still managing to record dialogue and effects - live. His first sound picture *Dynamite* made money, his next film did not and for his third he made a sound version of *The Squaw Man*. It flopped. His contract was not renewed.

To be dropped by Hollywood's top studio was humiliating in the extreme. 'I went round all the companies,' said DeMille, 'but nobody would even listen. I was through. I was dead. For the years that you had done - done big things - nothing. You were completely dirt.' He left the US for Europe in search of work.

# EPISODE 2 DETAILED SYNOPSIS

By 1931, Cecil B. DeMille was an outcast of the industry he had helped establish. Failing to find work in America he went to Russia. He reached no agreement with the Russian studios, but he did describe Communism as a fascinating experiment. 'I have had perfect freedom – have been everywhere,' he wrote. 'Almost nothing you have heard about it is true. There is more drama in one block on a street in Moscow than I have ever seen in an entire city anywhere else.'

DeMille returned to find America in the grip of the Depression. Millions were out of work. People who once lined up for a DeMille film now found the movies too expensive. Adolph Zukor was reluctant to take back the man he had forced out of Paramount but DeMille's old friend Jesse Lasky persuaded the studio to give him a one-picture deal. DeMille realised he would have to create spectacle without an epic budget. Desperate for a success, he chose a subject combining religion and Roman orgies. He was treading a fine line between what audiences might condemn and what they would revel in. *The Sign of the Cross* was one of the films that led to an increase in censorship. After it, he would have to be far more subtle in his treatment of sex but *Sign of the Cross* is packed with provocative moments. The film proved a colossal hit. DeMille's reputation soared and his success ensured he would stay with Paramount for the rest of his career.

DeMille became a radio star in 1936. He was host of the Lux Radio Theatre which featured most of the biggest stars of Hollywood. It attracted an audience of 30 million. At the same time, in his films for Paramount, DeMille favoured stories about the colourful history of America: in *The Plainsman* he showed the expansion of the west, in *Canadian Pacific* the battle to unite America with the Transcontinental railroad, in *North West Mounted Police* the heroic exploits in the rugged wilderness of Canada and in *The Unconquered* the struggles of the pre-revolutionary settlers. DeMille had established himself as an American icon. Despite the popularity of Lux Radio Theatre, DeMille was taken off the air following a dispute with his radio union.

With the end of the Second World War came the start of the Cold War and the appearance of a new enemy. When the Russians revealed they too had the atom bomb, America feared Communism would engulf the world. It had already reached Asia and the United Nations forces were being swept back in Korea. America began a hunt for the enemy within. The House Un-American Activities Committee sought to uncover any Communist influence in Hollywood. President Truman enacted a loyalty oath which had to be signed by all union officers.

While Joseph Mankiewicz, president of the Directors Guild, was in Europe, DeMille proposed the loyalty oath be made compulsory not just for union officers but for all members of the Director's Guild. Mankiewicz criticised what was done in his absence and DeMille and his supporters moved to have him dismissed. They sent telegrams to Guild members demanding his removal. 25 members put together a petition to hold a meeting to tackle the question. DeMille was voted down by the membership at a meeting which proved to be the most emotionally charged in the Guild's history.

Whatever his political troubles, DeMille was more popular with the public than he had ever been. He even appeared as himself in Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard* – he is shown

on the set of *Samson and Delilah*. His next film, *The Greatest Show on Earth*, was a monument to the touring circus, a tradition that was fast dieing out in the United States. The young actor Charlton Heston played the male lead in this picture. One of the thousands standing in line to see the film was Steven Spielberg, aged 4. Spielberg remembers the immense effect this film had on him.

At Paramount, DeMille dominated the industry as no director before or since. He made millions for the studio and brought it enormous prestige. Within the studio, DeMille had his own kingdom attended by a devoted crew of followers. He was extremely loyal to his crew, who had worked with him for years. When he won his first Academy Award, for *The Greatest Show on Earth*, he returned to his office to share the excitement with Anne Bauchens who has edited every DeMille film since 1918 and Henry Wilcoxon, who first worked with DeMille in 1934. He would gather his team together for one final, vast undertaking.

*The Ten Commandments* was the most expensive film yet made – it would run almost four hours. To keep this epic production under control, DeMille went to incredible lengths to prepare everything in advance. Unlike DeMille's silent version, locations for this entirely Biblical film were to be shot in Egypt. Filming in the desert was a staggering undertaking for a 73-year old. But DeMille seemed to cope remarkably well.

The most elaborate sequence in the film would involve an army of actors and technicians. The magnificence of the sets was surpassed only by the scale of the crowd DeMille had drawn together – one of the largest ever assembled for a motion picture. It was the climax of DeMille's entire career. Yet at the moment of his triumph, climbing a ladder to a camera platform, he suffered a massive heart attack.

DeMille flew back to California with his star, Charlton Heston. It was reported that he had had an attack of dysentery. His colleagues tried to make life easier for him, but with two years of relentless pressure ahead he could not possibly relax. For the climax of the film, the parting of the Red Sea, Paramount had to combine with the studio next door to build a gigantic tank on the backlot. Dump tanks unleashed 360,000 gallons for every take. The effect was one of the most remarkable ever achieved in motion pictures. The film was a huge success.

DeMille's health was failing but he was still anxious to make other films. He had plans for a picture about exploration in space. But he died on January 21, 1959 and was buried in the shadow of the studio he had helped to establish nearly fifty years before. More than anyone, DeMille epitomised Hollywood. And he was the most famous and consistently successful director in film history.